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2 senators claim CIA knew of Mengele drug links

By Dave Doubrava
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The CIA and other government agencies have known for at least a decade that accused Nazi war criminal Dr. Josef Mengele has been "heavily involved" in international drug trafficking, two U.S. senators said yesterday.

Based on declassified CIA documents, the two also charged that Mengele, while living in Paraguay under the protection of the government there, traveled freely throughout South America, never trying to hide his name or identity.

Sen. Arlen Specter and Sen. Alfonse D'Amato also charged that the U.S. government has been negligent in not pursuing Mengele for his alleged war crimes and drug involvement, saying the United States apparently "didn't give a damn."

Sen. Specter, R-Pa., said he believed the lack of American action showed the government "wanted to sweep [Mengele] under the rug" and said the government's "acts of omission" in pursuing Mengele "constitute protection."

The senators also said that two drug traffickers associated with Mengele, identified only as "Becker" and "Morelli," were arrested in New York City in 1979, placed under $5 million and $10 million bonds, but then "walked out of prison" and disappeared because of "a paperwork slip up."

Sen. D'Amato, R-N.Y., said recently released documents indicated that "Becker" and Mengele jointly owned a farm in Paraguay that served as the base of an international drug ring.

In addition, the two senators charged that U.S. government agencies may be withholding information which could further the investigatin into Mengele's current whereabouts and possibly lead to his arrest.

They said the seven CIA documents released yesterday were "overly sanitized" to delete references to "Becker's" and Mengele's alleged drug connections.

The declassified government documents also include an unverified report that Mengele's roommate in 1968 in Paraguay was Martin Bormann, Hitler's designated successor.

Bormann is thought to have died in 1945 in Berlin, but there have been recurring reports over the last four decades that he may have escaped to South America.

During World War II, Mengele was chief doctor at the Auschwitz death factory in Poland where more than 1 million Jews were killed as part of Adolf Hitler's "Final Solution."

The Justice Department last month announced it was conducting an intensive search to find Mengele and the U.S. Army is investigating reports that it may have had Mengele in custody shortly after the war.

Kathy Pherson, a CIA spokeswoman, said her group had turned the information over to different government agencies, including the State and Defense departments, when it was "appropriate."

The heavily censored documents also include a report that Mengele, 73, had undergone plastic surgery to make himself appear much younger.

The government papers say Mengele has used a number of false names, including "Dr. Henrique Wollman." This is Mengele's last known alias. It was used in 1972 in Encarnacion, Paraguay, where he practiced medicine.

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